

Absalom Ridgeley House  
58 Fourteenth Street  
Wheeling  
Ohio County  
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-201

HABS  
WVA  
35-WHEEL  
30-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ABSALOM RIDGELEY HOUSE

HABS No. WV-201

Location: 58 Fourteenth Street, Wheeling,  
Ohio County, West Virginia.

Present Owner: Donald Matson.

Present Occupant: Investors Diversified Services, Inc. and Drs. William R.  
and Bernard J. Grubler, dentists.

Present Use: Offices and apartment.

Significance: This simple two story brick structure was built about  
1838 by Absalom Ridgeley and has a double end chimney.  
Ridgeley was an early developer of the Ohio Valley  
region whose early investment in the area contributed  
to Wheeling's growth.

### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1838. An agreement between David McLure and Absalom Ridgeley dated June 5, 1838 (Deed Book 22, page 422) stated the latter's "intention forthwith to erect a good two story brick building on the remaining part of his said lot to cover the whole front of the same binding on Quincy Street (Fourteenth Street) and extend back thirty-six feet."
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following references to this property are found in the Ohio County, West Virginia Deed Books,
  - 1823 Deed, April, recorded in Deed Book 11, page 281, Michael Graham to Absalom Ridgeley \$750.00 for Lot 7 of Graham's Addition.
  - 1850 Will, probated 20 February, recorded in Will Book 2, page 63. Absalom Ridgeley devised to Elizabeth Smith. Article 4: "to my daughter, Elizabeth Smith, the wife of F. Smith, I devise...the last part of a certain lot of ground...on which is the easternmost brick house."
  - 1904 Deed, 5 March, recorded in Deed Book 114, page 462. Samuel H. Kelly et al (children of Elizabeth Smith) to Margaret Lange \$8,500.00 for the "easternmost brick house situated on Lot 7 in Graham's Addition".

- 1930 Will, probated 3 May, recorded in Will Book 16, page 502. Margaret J. Lange devised to Elizabeth Ewing et al "all her real and personal property."
- 1930 Deed, 2 October, recorded in Deed Book 223, page 368. Elizabeth Ewing et al to Mary Bertschy, widow eastern part of Lot 7 in Graham's Addition, Square 16, "including property known as 58 Fourteenth Street."
- 1931 Will, probated 3 March, recorded in Will Book 17, page 84. Mary Bertschy devised to Elmer E. Bertschy. Ninth clause: "The real estate situate at the southwest corner of Eoff and 14th Streets and formerly known as the Lange property, which I recently purchased, I give and devise unto my said son, Elmer E. Bertschy, absolutely and in fee simple." John Arbenz named executor of the estate.
- 1935 Deed, 18 June, recorded in Deed Book 237, page 587. John P. Arbenz, Special Commissioner to Louis Bertschy and Sons Company \$30,000.70 for 3 parcels of land including property known as 58 Fourteenth Street.
- 1937 Deed, 23 February, recorded in Deed Book 244, page 7. Louis Bertschy and Sons Company to Robert W. Lukens. Part of Lot 7 in Graham's Addition, Square 16, including property known as 58 Fourteenth Street.
- 1948 Deed, 16 September, recorded in Deed Book 309, page 361. Robert W. Lukens to Thelma Lalias. Part of Lot 7 in Graham's Addition, Square 16, including property known as 58 Fourteenth Street.
- 1948 Deed, 16 September, recorded in Deed Book 309, page 364. Thelma Lalias to Robert W. Lukens and Violet E. Lukens Part of Lot 7 in Graham's Addition, Square 16, including property known as 58 Fourteenth Street.
- 1961 Deed, 12 October, recorded in Deed Book 430, page 244. Violet E. Lukens to Donald F. Marson. Part of Lot 7 in Graham's Addition, Square 16, including property known as 58 Fourteenth Street.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None known.
5. Alterations and additions: According to Mr. Don F. Matson, Dr. Robert Lukens, now deceased, was responsible for most of the alterations in the house and extended it with the addition of a rear wing. The first floor appears to have been entirely gutted to provide room for a doctor's office. The stairway has been completely altered, presumably at the same time that the back wing was added, when a doorway was cut into the rear wall and the stair pitch was reduced to introduce a landing area at the doorway. (point of intersection)

On the second floor the front and back rooms each had a fireplace. Mr. Matson said that he believed that Dr. Lukens had had these fireplaces removed and one window beside the front room fireplace was blocked. Both rooms use the additional space produced by the absent fireplaces for storage.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

On June 5, 1938, Absalom Ridgeley made a formal agreement recorded in Deed Book 22, page 422, with his neighbor, David McClure, concerning a "two story brick building" he proposed to build. "He would like that portion of the said lot he heretofore conveyed to the said David which lies directly east of the building so contemplated to be erected, should remain open or free from having buildings erected on the same, so as not to obstruct the windows or lights which the said Absalom would place on his house, which would be built up to the line between him and the said David."

Subsequently it was recorded that "the said Absalom Ridgeley has adopted a definite plan for the erection of his aforesaid contemplated building. There will be no windows in the end of the same next the said David McClure to light his the said Ridgeley's front room in the said building, but there will be windows in the said end to light his back room and garret." The agreement between McClure and Ridgeley provided, therefore, that the windows of the Ridgeley house would not be "shut up by a building in front of them."

There are no land Books for Ohio County prior to 1845. The detailed account of Absalom Ridgeley's plan to erect a new building in 1838 gives us valuable insight into both the planning of a new structure as well as the agreements and contracts negotiated between neighbors to protect each other's privacy and property. Absalom Ridgeley proposed to build a modern and simple building. This building is a good example of the practical utilitarian structures built and lived in by the early tradesmen and merchants of Wheeling.

C. Sources of Information

Deed Book 22, Page 422.

Interview: Mr. Don F. Matson, August 23, 1976.

Prepared by: Candace Reed  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
September 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This simple two-story house is one of the earliest built in the central area of Wheeling.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Front three-bay section (original house) - twenty seven feet by forty feet deep; contemporary addition, twenty feet by forty five feet deep. Two stories,
2. Foundations: Cut stone.
3. Wall construction, finish and color. The original section is brick, painted gray; the addition is natural beige brick,
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: The only porch is a modern covered porch at the second floor addition in the rear.
5. Chimneys: There is one double chimney centered in the roof gable on the east side, original house, and one small chimney on the west side, contemporary addition.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doors and doorways: For front doorway, SEE photographs. There are other doors at the rear, in the contemporary addition,
  - b. Windows and shutters: For front windows, SEE photographs. The sash are not original. The lintels are wood, applied over the brick.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The original building has a gable, ridge parallel to front (north) with a standing seam tin covering. The contemporary addition has a flat built-up roof.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: SEE photographs for details. The roof cornice extends for eight feet around each side.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior has been altered considerably to accommodate modern medical offices. The general configuration of the original building does, however, bear some resemblance to its former layout. The entry foyer and stairs are to the right, along the west wall. To the left are office spaces that appear to have originally been two rooms. There are also two rooms upstairs and an attic loft space. A two-story contemporary addition dating from about 1955, has been added on the rear. There is also a basement, which was inaccessible.

2. Stairways: The existing stairs to the second floor are not original, having been changed during the building remodeling. They are, however, in the same general location as the original stairs. One indication of this is that there is an original stair to the attic loft, just above the lower stairs. The stair to the attic is enclosed. It has a straight run with a small 90° spiral at the top. There are no other stairs in the original building.
3. Flooring: The first and second floors of the original building are carpeted throughout.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings have been altered in most cases. They include wood veneer paneling, painted plaster and accoustical tile.
5. Door and doorways: Not original.
6. Mechanical equipment: Contemporary heating and central air conditioning.

D. Site and Surroundings:

The building faces north, fronting directly onto Fourteenth Street. A new one-story structure abuts the west wall and a small yard separates the residence from the adjacent building to the east. The new addition extends to an alley at the rear of the property.

Prepared by: John McRae  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
September, 1976

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, HABS Principal Architect, in cooperation with the Friends of Wheeling, Inc. The measured drawings were made during the summer of 1976 under the supervision of John M. McRae (University of Florida) with architectural technicians Mark L. Hall, Foreman, (Pennsylvania State University); Edward C. Freeman, (Arizona State University); Ruthie D. Wiley (Mississippi State University); Alan G. Wilig (City College of New York); and Architectural Historian Candace Reed (George Washington University). The photographs were taken in 1977 by HABS Photographer Jack E. Boucher.

**ADDENDUM TO:**  
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